

# Good Start, Grow Smart: The State of the States

## Program Coordination Requirement

*A State plan for coordinating at least 4 early childhood programs, which may include CCDF, Head Start, programs in the public schools, and TANF, among others.*

### Questions Raised by States

- What is the goal of the coordination: increased access of early childhood services? optimum use of resources? raising the quality of early education programming? reaching all providers?
- Is the coordination intended to have a particular focus, such as financing? literacy? regulations?
- Does the State plan need to include a specified set of coordinating activities? other elements?
- Does the coordination have to occur at the State level if much decision-making relevant to early childhood program coordination has been devolved to the county or local level?
- How will the Federal agencies – Head Start, child care, and education – coordinate policies, funding, guidelines, requirements, data collection, etc., to facilitate collaboration at the State level?



### What We Know

Many States have been coordinating several programs for a long time. In fact, 36 States have statutory language encouraging or requiring programs to coordinate child care and early childhood education systems. This coordination has typically included two or three early childhood programs responding to new State or Federal policies or to a need to meet to implement a State initiative. However, if the intent of the “State plan for coordinating at least 4 early childhood programs” is to achieve a systemic approach to dealing with varying regulations, funding guidelines, and expectations, States report that they will face more challenges in this regard. Recent emphasis by the Head Start and Child Care Bureaus on partnerships among Head Start, child care, and State prekindergarten programs has brought some early childhood program administrators and State-level stakeholders to the table to identify and address financing, regulatory and coordination issues that result from the interactions of different systems. Many States (Ohio, Massachusetts and Georgia are but a few) have developed initiatives coordinating these systems in the wake of welfare reform. The creation of the State Head Start Collaboration Offices has helped strengthen the infrastructure necessary to address some of these issues. The QUILT project is another means of structural development and support of the issues that arise in States around collaboration. While some States have co-located their early education and child care departments, the disjuncture between State DOE and HHS efforts remains a major challenge to be addressed.

State efforts regarding collaboration are impacted by numerous factors:

- ✓ The size, geography and demographics of the State;
- ✓ Prior relationships among State players and their departments;
- ✓ The rates of turnover of key personnel;
- ✓ State structural organization/reorganization; and
- ✓ Current or previous State-wide initiatives requiring or fostering collaborative efforts.

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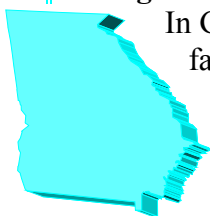
## State Examples

A Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) study of early learning initiatives in three States notes that “While no State has yet implemented a comprehensive universal structure of early care and education, there can be important lessons from the experience of States that have undertaken significant initiatives.”

The study identified five overarching challenges for States trying to build systemic early education systems:

- 1) Developing comprehensive vision;
- 2) Expanding fiscal resources;
- 3) Addressing regulatory differences among programs and funding streams;
- 4) Implementing early education initiatives across different structures and constituencies; and
- 5) Tracking progress and measuring results.

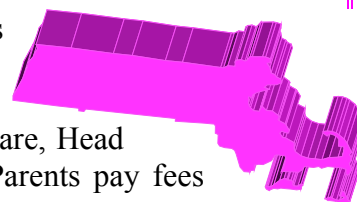
### Georgia



In Georgia, State lottery money funds a voluntary, free prekindergarten program available to all families. This Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) initiative includes collaboration among child care centers, Head Start, and the public schools. Most Georgia 4-year-old children participate in Georgia Pre-K. Participating programs must choose one of several approved curricula, and operate classrooms for at least 6.5 hours a day, 180 days a year.

### Massachusetts

Massachusetts' Community Partnerships for Children initiative provides funding to localities to coordinate planning and expand the supply and quality of early education settings for 3- and 4-year-old children of working parents. Localities must form councils including representation from child care, Head Start and public school districts, and develop plans to meet local needs. Parents pay fees according to the sliding fee scale for the State's subsidized child care program.



### Ohio



Ohio committed State resources to reach more Head Start-eligible children through State-funded Head Start slots and partnerships between Head Start grantees and child care centers and family child care providers. Ohio encourages use of blended funding from Federal and State Head Start funds and the child care subsidy funding stream to provide full-day, full-year services to eligible children.

(These descriptions are drawn from *State Initiatives to Promote Early Learning: Next Steps in Coordinating Subsidized Child Care, Head Start, and State Pre-Kindergarten* (p.1). Rachel Schumacher, 2001)

## Additional Selected Resources

*Child Care and Early Education Coordination in the States – A Statutory Overview*. Scott Groginsky, 2002.  
<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/coordsum.htm>.

*State Initiatives to Promote Early Learning: Next Steps in Coordinating Subsidized Child Care, Head Start, and State Pre-Kindergarten*. Rachel Schumacher, 2001.  
<http://www.clasp.org/Pubs/DMS/Documents/1012494538.49/policy%20brief%20summary%20link.pdf>.

*Bringing It Together: State-Driven Community Early Childhood Initiatives*  
Helen Blank, Atelia Melaville, Laurie Miller, 2002. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/pdf/bringtogether.pdf>.